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THE LAND *of*
MAKE-BELIEVE
and other
CHRISTMAS
POEMS

BY
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"THE GENTLEMAN RAGMAN,"



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“Merry Christmas”

Ho, God bless you—you who said
“Merry Christmas” when you sped
Past me in the crowded street.
Every syllable was sweet,
Every word in every part
Sent a tingle to my heart!

Ho, God bless you—stranger man!
You who said it as you ran,
Waiting not for my reply,
But, a stranger, hastened by;
Ay, God bless you, through and through—
Merry Christmas back to you!

THE LAND OF MAKE-BELIEVE

The Land of Make-Believe

I

In the Land of Make-Believe there is a tree of living
green,
And the Christmas fairies deck it till their jewels
flash between
All the branches that are bending with good things
for me and you ;—
With the joyous gleam and glitter of our Christmas
dreams come true ;
And beside the blazing candles many a Christmas
dream we weave,
For we know it is a magic land—this Land of Make-
Believe !

II

Let us let the little children have the fairies and
the rest ;
Let them keep the glad illusions of the years that
are the best ;
Let them know the joyous fancies of the mystic
fairyland,
And the wonderful enchantments only they can
understand—
For the years are coming to them when they'll
sigh, and softly grieve
That they left the realm of childhood and the Land
of Make-Believe.

III

In the Land of Make-Believe there is a stalk that
meets the sky,
And Jack goes up and down it—we have seen him,
you and I ;

There's a winding path that leads us to the deep
heart of the wood,
And a-many times we've trod it with the quaint
Red Riding Hood ;
There's a frowning cliff surmounted by a castle
grim and grim,
And old Bluebeard lurks within it—you know how
we peered at him !

IV

In the Land of Make-Believe there is the palace of
King Cole,
Where we've entered with his fiddlers, carrying his
pipe and bowl ;
And we've waited with Aladdin while he rubbed his
magic ring,
And aroused the willing genii that came swift of
foot and wing ;

And we've seen the gallant Sindbad; and we've held
the dimpled hand
Of the dainty little Alice as we've gone through
Wonderland.

V

In the Land of Make-Believe we used to ramble
up and down
To the playing of the Piper in the streets of Hamelin
Town;
And we saw the fairy coachman make the horses
rear and prance
When we rode with Cinderella to the palace for the
dance ;
And of evenings, you remember that we saw some
one go by,
And we knew it was the Sandman, come to shut
each blinking eye !

VI

All the others—how we loved them! How they
used to come and play
Till at last they sent a message that they'd come
no more, one day,
For they had to leave us lonely with our broken
dreams and toys
While they stayed behind in childhood with the
little girls and boys—
Ho, the visions we might conjure and the fancies
we might weave
Had we never found the highway from the Land of
Make-Believe.

The Lost Boy

The-Boy-I-Used-to-Be would know
How far it is to Christmas Day,
And every night in dreams would go
Swift-paced along the wondrous way;
And he by day would count the weeks,
The days—the very hours, indeed!—
With eager eyes and flaming cheeks
The lore of Christmas he would read.

Ah, he knew all the jolly tales
The folk about the Day would weave;
With boyish faith, which never fails,
He had the knowledge to believe.
He knew the legends all were true,
He scrawled queer letters to the Saint,
He heard the fairy horns that blew
Their marvel-music, far and faint.

He heard beyond the northern lights
The pounding of the reindeer hoofs,
And counted all the long, long nights
Ere they should course above the roofs;
And Christmas Eve he heard the song
Of Santa Claus, while rapt he lay;
Heard Santa's laughter, clear and strong,
When he drove merrily away.

O, all of this, and more, was his;
The magic of the Christmas time—
But now what little magic is
In thinking of that silver chime,
In thinking of the things I knew
So clearly in the long ago,
And knew not that their being true
Was quite the fairest thing to know!

Of all the Christmas wishes made
This is the deepest in the heart:
That I might find the light that played
Through all the long days set apart,

And might believe the legends quaint,
The sleigh-tracks in the snow might see,
And know the jolly olden Saint,
As did The-Boy-I-Used-to-Be!

The Christmas-tree Wood

Ho, little fellow, if you will be good
Some day you may go to the Christmas-Tree Wood.
It lies to the north of the Country of Dreams,
It glitters and tinkles and sparkles and gleams;
For tinsel and trinkets grow thick on the trees
Where wonderful toys are for him who will seize.

You go by the way of the Road of Be-Good
Whenever you go to the Christmas-Tree Wood,
And when you draw near you will notice the walls
That rise high about the fair City of Dolls,
Whose entrance, unless you are wanted, is barred
By Tin-Soldier regiments standing on guard.

It's over in Candy Land, there where the shops
Forever are turning out peppermint drops;
Where fences are built of the red-and-white sticks
And houses are fashioned of chocolate bricks,

Where meadow and forest and sidewalk and street
Are all of materials children can eat.

You sail on a ship over Lemonade Lake
And drink all the waves as they quiver and break,
And then, when you land, you are under the trees
Where Jumping Jacks jump in the sway of the
breeze—

But only the children most awfully good
Can ever go into the Christmas-Tree Wood.

The Empty Stockings

The firelight flickers soft across the floor,
And plays among the shadows here and there,
As though it sought the lad who comes no more,
To let it lay its gold upon his hair.
And she—she sits alone here in the glow
And smoothes the empty stockings on her knee
And sighs and smiles, and thinks of long ago,
When jolly lights were dancing in the tree.

The empty stockings! It is Christmas Eve,
And distant songs come faintly from without,
While blithest chimes take up the thread, and weave
A singing-fabric blent with boyish shout;
But she has none of all the outer joy,
She has shut in herself with all her grief,
With all her fond remembrance of her boy,
The stockings and a withered holly wreath.

She minds the times his rosy little feet
Have faltered as they came across the room;
She minds his laugh—no carol was more sweet;
The firelight creeps up to her from the gloom;
The firelight seems to tire of all its play,
And comes to rest about her while she broods,
Save that some dancing flashes fain would stray
Into the whisper-haunted solitudes.

And so the fire burns low, the coals turn red,
And die into a lifeless, flaking gray—
Then out upon the midnight air is sped
The burst of sound saluting Christmas Day!
Then she amid the chiming clamor hears
His voice! What other accent could it be?
A smile of peace gleams sunlike through her tears—
She smooths the empty stockings on her knee.

The March of the Toys

Ho, little girls; and ho, little boys!
Have you heard of the wonderful march of the
toys?

With a drummity-drummity-drummity-drum
In glittering regiments hither they come.
The bugle has blown in the Christmas-Tree land—
Has blown them a summons that they understand,
And little tin soldiers, and jacks-in-the-box,
And beautiful dollies in beautiful frocks,
And swaggering dandies, and queer little Japs,
And jumping-jacks—O, they're the liveliest chaps!
Are marching this way to the magical thrum
Of the drummity-drummity-drummity-drum.

Ho, little boys; and ho, little girls!
The dollies are dancing and shaking their curls
To the drummity-drummity-drummity-drum,
And the soldiers are gallant and gorgeous and grum,

And the prancingest horses and wooliest sheep,
And the mooingest cows that the toy farmers
keep,

And the squealiest sheep, and wee elephants, too,
And the camels all humpy and shiny and new
Have set out in a regular circus parade
To the queer little, clear little tune that is played
On the drummity-drummity-drummity-drum.

Ho, little girls; and ho, little boys!
The little toy-drummer sets up such a noise
On his drummity-drummity-drummity-drum,
That you'd think that his little toy fingers were
numb.

And the little toy fifer, he blows on his fife
Quite the merriest air you have heard in your
life—

And the little red wagons, and autos, and carts,
And the whirliest engines with silvery parts,
And the bouncingest balls, and the snappiest whips
Follow on to the call from the toy bugler's lips,
And the drummity-drummity-drummity-drum.

Ho, little boys; and ho, little girls!

The regiment dances and prances and whirls

To the drummity-drummity-drummity-drum.

From the gates of the wonderful toyland they come,

And each of them will stop with a child that is good

(Or at least has been always as good as he could);

And to-night if you listen and listen you may

Hear the little toy bugler a-bugling away,

And the little toy fifer a-fifing like mad,

And the steps of the toys that are jolly and glad,

As hither and hither and hither they come

To the drummity-drummity-drummity-drum.

The Skeptic Convinced

My pa, he say I ought to be
Th' very bestes' kind o' boy,
Or I won't have no Christmas-tree,
An' mebbe not a single toy!
'Cause Santa Claus he's watchin' out
For boys 'at don't buhhave 'emselves—
If they don't mind what they're about
He leaves their presunts on his shelves!
N'en I say I don't think there was
No such a man as Santa Claus!

N'en pa, he say, "All right, you'll see"—
He'll take me down to where he's at.
N'en he go' tell my ma, an' she
Put on my coat an' gloves an' hat,
An' pa he take me on th' car
To some big store 'at's awful high.

He takes me in, n'en, "Here we are!"

He say, an' right by me—O my!
All dressed in red 'ith lots o' fur
Is Santa Claus. He is, yes, sir!

An' Santa Claus he shake my hand
An' ast me what I like to get.
My legs shake so I 'most can't stand,
An' I get cold, an' n'en I sweat,
An' my hair seem like it won't keep
Laid down like my ma breshed it—No,
It feel ist like your foot's asleep—
'Cause, somehow, I was frightened so.
An' when I try if I can't speak
My voice ist is a little squeak!

N'en Santa Claus, he say, "All right,"
An' say he know 'at I'll be good
So's he can come around that night—
I nod my head to say I would.

N'en pa he take me home again

An' tell my ma, an' they ist laugh,

An' make me cry a while, an' n'en

I say I didn't tell him half

I want. But ma says: "Don't you s'pose

Old Santa Claus he always knows?"



The Unseen Tragedy

The Unseen Tragedy

Somewhere there is a little boy whose eyes are full
of woe
Because his empty stockings now are swaying to
and fro.
His wan-faced mother takes him up and holds him
close and tries
To coax the light of gladness once again into his
eyes.

Somewhere there is a little girl who wakens with
dismay
And sees no splendid dolly she had dreamed of
yesterday,
And bare the floor and bare the hearth, and deep
the little sigh
From the wee heart that wonders why good Santa
passed her by.

Ah, no! The little children who grieve on Christmas
Day
Are not in huts and hovels a thousand miles away—
They are so near they hear us, our laughter and our
song,
And all the joys we have to-day serve to make great
the wrong.

The Druggist's Daughter

She is the druggist's daughter,
And she is wondrous fair;
She stands beneath the mistletoe
A vision rapt and rare.
The young men crowd about her,
They elbow through the crush,
And underneath the mistletoe
They see her shyly blush.

She is the druggist's daughter,
A radiant belle is she,
Unconscious of the mistletoe,
It seems, as she can be.
With modesty becoming,
Her lovely head she dips,
But there beneath the mistletoe
The swains all find her lips.

She is the druggist's daughter,
The Christmas guests have sped,
She now takes down the mistletoe
That hung above her head.
"It worked," she softly whispers,
"It worked; I knew it would—
It's imitation mistletoe,
But it is just as good!"

The Day of the Child

The tree shines with the candle-glow,
The trinkets glitter jewel-wise,
And we would that our souls might know
The joy told in the children's eyes.
Such sheer delight as this of theirs—
A wondrous happiness it is!
And every word the message bears:
This is the children's day—and His!

Let us come, as the Wise Men came
Those nineteen centuries ago,
Led by the Star's eternal flame
That bade them rise and hasten on.
They brought rare frankincense and myrrh,
They brought rich gems and graven gold,
They knelt, adoring, near to Her,
And all their marvellings they told.

Aye, as those Men of long ago,
To-day we, too, may see the Star,
May see its mystic heavenly glow
Flash out o'er Childland fair and far;
And from our hands now fall the gifts,
And we know why the Wise Men smiled
With gratefulness; and each heart lifts
Its chant of worship of the Child.

The Twenty-sixt'

I've washed my face an' combed my hair,
An' not forgot to say my prayer ;
An' never jerked or slammed the door,
Nor gone a slidin' on the floor.
Because four weeks ago I knew
That Christmas Day would soon be due—
I'm waitin' for the twenty-sixt'!

I've had a thousand chances where
I might 'a yanked somebody's chair ;
I've seen a thousand dandy ways
Where I might do some things to raise
The dickens, but I've had to wait
Till Christmas is wiped off the slate—
I'm waitin' for the twenty-sixt'!

Three nights a week I've set an' read
Until 'twas time to go to bed,

When I was tempted strong to go
An' tease my sister an' her beau;
Three nights a week her beau has smiled
An' said I am a model child—

I'm waitin' for the twenty-sixt'!

I've been the best boy in the school,
Learned everything an' broke no rule;
The teacher tells the other boys
To notice how I make no noise,
An' how I get my answers right,
An' how I always am polite—

I'm waitin' for the twenty-sixt'!

I've gone to Sunday-school each week
An' told why Moses was so meek,
An' who was Cain, an' all about
The way Golia' got knocked out.
The teacher Sunday told my ma
I'm the best boy she ever saw—

I'm waitin' for the twenty-sixt'!

An' yesterday a man went by
Who wore a plug-hat two feet high;
I had a snowball, an' I itched
An' squirmed an' all my fingers twitched
To sock it one, but I did not.
A boy must sacrifice a lot—
 I'm waitin' for the twenty-sixt'!

O, Christmas comes but once a year,
But it's a long time gettin' here!
It's hard to do just what you should;
It's hard to keep on bein' good
When wall-eyed Walter King comes by
An' yells, "Fight me! You dassen't try!"
 I'm waitin' for the twenty-sixt'!

The Well-filled Sock

There is pleasure in the holly and the frosty mistle-
toe,

And an ecstasy in the Christmas-tree, with presents
swinging low—

The holly-berries blazing in the firelight's dancing
gleam

That plays among the shadows like the fairies in a
dream—

But there's gladness, O, there's gladness that the
others seem to mock,

In the heaping, bulging aspect of a Well-filled
Sock!

We may sing of burning yule-logs, or the pudding
made of plum,

Or the maiden shy whose hose hangs by her little
brother's drum;

We may hear the chimes that echo far across the
drifting snow,
And in fancy turn the pages of the Book of Long
Ago;
But the key that, to my notion, will the gates of
joy unlock,
Has the bumpy, lumpy outline of the Well-filled
Sock.

Here's a health to you at Christmas! Here's a
bumper to the brim!
And we will drink while glasses clink, with hale and
hearty vim:
May your heart be filled with rapture, with a pleasure
rich and rare;
May heaps of joy without alloy be all you have to
bear,
And may, O, may this blessing complete your joyful
stock—
The goodness and the gladness of the Well-filled
Sock!

“Late Christmas Afternoon”

The glad, glad bells of morning, the laughter at the
dawn!—

The lustre of the children’s eyes is fair to look
upon—

But, O, the best of Christmas—the best day of them
all—

Is when the lazy firelight makes pictures on the wall,
And I may sit in silence and give myself the boon
Of going back to boyhood, late Christmas afternoon.

Here I shall fall to musing of pictures in the grate—
There, eager for my summons, the host of boy-days
wait;

And in and out a-marching I’ll see them come and go
With hands waved high in welcome—the boys I
used to know;

And there, if I am patient, ’twill be for me to see
As one sees in a mirror, the boy I used to be.

Out of the swaying shadows will rise the long ago—
The sleigh-bells' tinkle-tinkle, the soft kiss of the
 snow,
The white sea of the meadow, where pranking
 winds will lift
The long sweep of the billows foamed up in drift on
 drift,
And crisp across the valley will come a bell-sweet
 tune
To set me nodding, nodding, late Christmas after-
 noon.

Late afternoon on Christmas! The twilight sooth-
 ing in,
And me with these my visions of glad days that
 have been!
For I shall dream and wander down unforgotten
 ways,
My eager arms enfolding all of my yesterdays.
Without, the mellow echoes of blended chime and
 hymn;
Within, the bygone voices in murmurs far and dim.

O, mine the gift of fancy, and mine this magic
chair,

And mine the dim procession of Christmases that
were!

I ask no richer token of love on Christmas Day
Than this which comes unbidden, than this which
will not stay—

This wealth of recollections that vanishes oversoon,
The dreamland of the shadows, late Christmas
afternoon.

Waiting

I

In those old days—those fair old days—what fancies
would we weave

When we sat waiting for the Saint to come on
Christmas Eve!

The stockings, limp and shadow-like against the
ruddy glow,

Agape in their expectancy, swung in a slanting row
That matched the difference in height of all our
wond'ring heads—

We watched the fairy flames toss up their wealth
of jewel-reds.

The “pit-pat” of the velvet snow against the win-
dow-pane!

Our fainting faith, our lurking fears that all our
hopes were vain!

Our whispered reassurances to bring some sort of cheer
That long and long and long ago the good Saint
 came—last year!
And then the ashes of the fire, and then the speech-
 less pause,
And then soft-footed sleep claimed us who watched
 for Santa Claus.

II

O still the child-heart throbs its songs and still the
 child-soul lives,
Ahunger for the scanty crust the grown-up fancy
 gives!
We hush the knowledge that we have and struggle
 to believe
The wonder-tales we know are true—the tales of
 Christmas Eve.
We wait, and wistfully we watch the dancing flame
 and spark,
And turn our faces from the heavy curtain of the
 dark.

We nod in time to childish rhyme, to songs we had
forgot,
We clutch the golden memories of days that now
are not;
And O! the night is very long, the hour is grievous
late,
But still, with olden faith regained, we bide our time
and wait,
And from the door of youth our dream the barring
curtain draws,
And we—aye, we, as children all—still wait for
Santa Claus!

The Blessed Night

(From an old legend)

When comes the night that marks the time the
Christ Child came to bless
And comfort all the weary world, and soothe our
sore distress,
Then in the manger, low and bare, and in the
plainest stall,
The light of grace fills all the place and shines
above it all.

*The light of grace shines in the place till comes
the gray of morn,
For it was in a stable bare the gentle Christ was born.*

The lowly structure beams with light, and angels
sweetly sing,
For that a stable gave the world its good and
gracious King;

For that the Lord Himself was there upon that
joyous night
When came the kings with precious things to show
their great delight—

When came the kings with carollings, and said :
“ The Lord is come, ”
Then in the glory of His face each one was
stricken dumb.

On this fair night a mystic glow illumines the humble
place,
And saintly melodies resound where first was seen
His face.
The oxen bow upon their knees, as though each
bending beast
Would thusly show that it must know the time of
sin had ceased—

Would thusly show that in the glow of rare
celestial flame
Our Lord Himself upon a time unto His people came.

But on the morn of Christmas Day the manger and
the stall
Show naught that tells us of the light that was on
floor and wall,
Nor tells of how the Wise Men came to worship and
adore—
All bleak and bare the stalls are there, with wisps
upon the floor.

*All bleak and bare the stalls are there, yet ever
and alway
The message that the Christ Child brought rings
through the Christmas Day.*

The Echo of the Song

The shepherds lay a-sleeping two thousand years
ago

When from the dome of heaven there flashed a
wondrous glow,

From high, and high, and higher than all the suns
that are

There dripped the radiant lustre of that one mystic
star.

And all the angels chorused, and chorused yet
again :

“Of joy we bring great tidings ; peace and good-
will to men.”

The gates of heaven opened from eastward to the
west,

The song came surging onward in voices of the
blest ;

The gates of heaven opened from westward to the
east

And all the world was music ere yet the song had
ceased ;

The singing stars went chiming beyond all mortal
ken

In harmony triumphant : "Peace and good-will to
men."

The waking shepherds listened; the lowing kine fell
still;

There was a hush of wonder in valley and on hill,
While light and song came streaming from out of
heaven's height,

Where neither sun nor shadow are known, nor day
or night—

It was the song that rises above all things that be,
It was the light that silvers the great eternal sea.

Across the field of heaven the angels flung the song,
And suns and stars uncounted sang as it sped
along;

The shepherds lay and marvelled and dimly understood

What was this chant of glory that pulsed with naught but good;

The song was done, and silence dropped round-about them then,

But left the ceaseless echo: "Peace and good-will to men."

Ho, this the light triumphant, the light in children's eyes!

Their laughter has the cadence of songs from paradise;

And you and I, we know it, and we both see and hear

The star that lit the heavens, the song that chorused clear,

And in our hearts this season is echoing again

The song that woke the shepherds: "Peace and good-will to men."

The Man Who "Shows How"

Consider the man who showeth the way mechanical
toys are worked;

Who telleth with great exactness how the string
should be tied and jerked;

Who grabbeth the lop-eared elephant and bendeth
the winding thing,

Until he breaketh the trunk and tail and busteth
the moving spring;

Who taketh the engine and the train and starteth
them on the track,

And wrecketh the whole arrangement while he
smileth in glee. Alack!

My son, my son, consider the man, he flourisheth
everywhere;

He squeezeth the "ma-ma" from the doll and
twisteth the growling bear;

He worketh the mimic theatre, and voweth that he
doth know
The manner in which it shall be done—but endeth
the little show;
He choketh the “moo” in the muley-cow, the
“baa” in the woolly sheep,
He breaketh the eye of the jointed doll so that she
may never sleep;
He robbeth the lion of his roar, he crusheth the
camel’s hump;
He spraineth the jumping-jack—he doth—he taketh
from it the jump;
He windeth the music-box too much and stoppeth
its melody;
He trieth to work the dancing-doll and breaketh its
nimble knee.
All this he doth and a whole lot more, and wareth
his knowing grin,
And reckoneth naught of the grief aroused because
of his deeds of sin,

For always he showeth the way to work the new
mechanical toy
Before the thing hath ever been touched by any
delighted boy.
He telleth the children great and small to stand to
the side and wait
The while he showeth the proper way to get it to
operate;
If infantile minds are filled with the thought that
they know the way to wind
The horse or the sheep or the lion or bear, he stop-
peth them, smiling and kind;
He maketh them wait; he maketh them weep; he
maketh them clamor and wail;
He cracketh the face of the phonograph-doll and
spoil eth the tiger's tail,
And all because he knoweth it all—the sum of all
knowledge is his—
My son, my son, take heed of the man, observe
what a nuisance he is.

Consider his ways and be wise in thy days; 'twill
add to the lot of thy joys,

If thou shunnest the path of that coxer of wrath—
the man who must wind up the toys.

Christmas Found

“A nickel, please—a coin to buy me bread!”

He begged of all the busy passers-by.

They did not see his palsy-shaken head

Nor mark the patient yearning of his eye,

So busy they—they did not hear his plea,

His mumbled words to them as they drew near:

“Please spare a little Christmas now for me—

I used to have a Christmas every year.”

So, buffeted about among the crowd

He slowly made his way along the street—

Stoop-shouldered; life had borne on him and bowed

His head, and taken sureness from his feet.

The happy folk, intent on other things,

Went by, their minds too full for them to hear:

“A nickel, please! You don’t know what it
brings.

I used to have a Christmas every year.”

He used to have a Christmas every year!

His mind was filled with thoughts of olden times
When there was light, and joy, and warmth, and
cheer,

And over all the throb of Christmas chimes.

His trembling fingers curved as if to clasp

The days that were so far and yet so near,
The happy days that had escaped his grasp—

“I used to have a Christmas every year.”

And so, remembering, he wandered on

Through streets and over roads that led him far,
When, just before the coming of the dawn,

There blazed adown his path a wondrous star,
And Some One came and bent above him then—

.

Upon his cheek there gleamed a frozen tear,

But there was one less of the weary men

Who used to have a Christmas every year.

An Ethiopian Santa

“Mawnin’, sistah Johnsing. Mawnin’, brotah
Green.

Hope de fines’ Chris’mas yo’ has evah seen.

Hope yo’ white folks treat yo’ moughty well an’
good—

Gib yo’ all a ’membunce, lak dey sholy should.

Lawzy! Whut dat roas’in’? I caïn’t undehestan’?

Santy Claus dat fotch hit uz a cullud man.”

“Um-m-mpuh! Sistah Johnsing, sholy dat smell
sweet!

Seem to me yo’ cookin’ simply caïn’t be beat.

Bress mah soul, hit possum! Lawd, now, look
at dat!

Juice is des a-oozin’ fum he side so fat!

Lan’ o’ grace! De gravy mought-nigh fill de
pan.

Golly! Guess dat Santy uz a cullud man!



An Ethiopian Santa

“Tell yo’, sistah Johnsing, I don’t want no pie;
Des gib me some possum. Um-m-m! Den
lemme die!

Leave de white man’s tukkey on de highes’ roos’—
Lemme cyahve dat possum. Sistah, tu’n me
loose!

Bress de Lawd fo’ possum—fines’ in de lan’;
T’ank de Lawd dat Santy uz a cullud man!”

The Santa Claus Trust

We ain't agoin' to have no Christmas-tree down
where I live,
'Cause pa he says 'at Santy Claus ain't got no gifts
to give;
An' Christmas won't be like it was last year an'
year before,
An' mebbe we won't never have no Christmases no
more.
Us kids won't get no candy, an' our faces won't be
mussed
With orange juice, for Santy Claus has gone an'
joined a trust!

My pa he ain't a-workin' now—just loafin' round
the town;
He hasn't got no work to do—the factory's shut
down.

An' ma p'tends her dresses ain't so old an' thin an'
worn

As what they are; an' all us kids is wearin' clo'es
'at's torn.

But worse'n all, we ain't agoin' to have no Christ-
mas—just

Because that mean old Santy Claus has gone an'
joined a trust!

Last night I ast ma why it was—I thought good
girls an' boys

Could always have their Christmases, with lots o'
fun an' toys;

An' ma she tried to smile at me, but, honestly, she
cried,

An' pa he looked so worried-like that I felt bad
inside.

You bet when I get big I'm goin' to take a brick
an' bust

The feller who got Santy Claus to go an' join a
trust!

A Song of Christmas

Sing a song of Christmas, with the tingle in the air,
And mistletoe and holly and the berries every-
where;

Sing it in a cadence that will show its measures
start

In the happy lilt of the beating of your heart—
Sing, and see a picture of the stockings in a row,
Casting swaying shadows in the light of long ago.

Ho, the song of Christmas! Of all carols 'tis the
best,

For it springs in gladness from the music in your
breast,

Rises from the knowledge that the world is good to
you,

Gets its joyous measures from the good you mean
to do—

Mellowest and tenderest of all the songs you know,
Built upon the golden gleams from out the long
ago.

Sing a song of Christmas; sing the glory of the
star
Flinging down its wondrous beams upon the lands
afar;
Catch the echo of the chant the waking shepherds
heard,
When from out the sky there fell each unforgotten
word—
Yes, and sing the memory of all the olden glow
From the embers in the grate this long and long
ago.

Ho, the song of Christmas! It is yours and it is
mine;
Out of heart-held memories we make it fair and
fine,

And we breathe the lasting faith that all the world
is good,
When we time the hearts that beat again in brother-
hood—
Sing it softly, sing it in a cadence swift or slow,
When your sighs and smiles are blent in thoughts
of long ago.

The Carpenter of Galilee

"Is not this the carpenter, son of Mary?"

—Mark, vi. 3.

No dreamer He, who spoke of toil,
Whose simple message to us all
Breathed with the savor of the soil
And thrilled with its compelling call.
No dreamer, for He knew the worth
That in the finished task must be—
This greatest workman of the earth,
The Carpenter of Galilee.

He knew the striving and the stress
Of labor; He could understand
The soul-depressing weariness
That often comes to heart and hand;
He knew how weary night and day
Brought heavy longings for relief—
He, too, had walked on Sorrow's way
And He was well acquaint with Grief.

But He knew also of the strength
That grows with striving—did this One—
The confidence that comes at length
In viewing all that is well done.
The endlessness of Labor's quest
Was His; and He said: "Come to Me
All ye that labor, and find rest"—
This Carpenter of Galilee.

Ah, learning that is not of schools,
And knowledge that is gathered in
From comradeship of bench and tools!
He knew what battles were to win
In daily toilings; and He knew
The satisfaction and the pride
Of doing best what one may do—
And that is labor glorified.

Perchance He looked from out the door
With prescient eyes, and saw the lands
Where all our toil should cease—and more,
He saw the House Not Made with Hands—

The end of all His laborings,
The dwelling that He said should be;
This Man of Great and Common Things,
The Carpenter of Galilee.

The Christmas Song

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.”—Luke, ii. 14.

One night there came a carol from the sky—
A song of songs, at which all hearts beat high;
A melody of wondrous dulcetness,
Rich in the strains that comfort men, and bless;
It swept its way in waves of harmony
Until it thrilled on every land and sea;
It echoed where the shades of night were drawn,
And surged against the portals of the dawn,
And by the blessed witchery of time
It has been blent into each Christmas chime—
 By field and hearth,
 O'er hill and glen,
Rings: “Peace on earth,
 Good-will to men!”

Now when the bells awake on Christmas morn
To sing the song that rang when Christ was born,

From out their throbbing throats in tones of gold
There peals the glory song—that song of old;
The song that fell in rapture from the sky;
The song whose lifting strains can never die;
It holds no accent that a measure mars
But echoes all the gladness of the stars,
And soothingly it folds about the heart
Of him who in his grief would stand apart.

“Peace on the earth,
Good-will to men”—
This song of worth
Comes, glad, again.

And when the mellow chimes again are heard
It seems they bear each comfort-giving word
That men desire, if they be hind or king,
Or slave or sage; the chimes serenely bring
The very speech their spirits most desire—
The message of that joyful angel choir
Which once bent graciously above the plain
And made the world to wonder, with one strain.

No music ever written, and no song
So gracious as this one, that lives so long.

“Praise him with mirth;

Rejoice again.

Peace—peace on earth,

Good-will to men!”

“The Night Before Christmas”

“’Tis the night before Christmas”—

I whisper the rhyme
And wander in fancy
To “once on a time.”
I see the big fireplace,
The girls and the boys,
The long, heaped-up stockings,
The drums and the toys.

“’Tis the night before Christmas”—

So old and so new!
With all of its dreamings
So good and so true.
I see all the faces
Forgotten so long,
And out of the twilight
There murmurs a song.

“’Tis the night before Christmas”—

And here, by my grate,
The past rises, glowing;
The years lose their weight;
The boy-days come trooping
At memory’s call,
And gleam in the embers
That flicker and fall.

“’Tis the night before Christmas”—

Ah, could I but clutch
The gold of my fancies!
’Twould go at my touch!
The shouts and the laughter
Now sweet to my ear
Would shrink to a silence
Too deep and too drear.

“’Tis the night before Christmas”—

Remembrances stir
As sweet as the cherished
Frankincense and myrrh.

And, hark! As the visions
Grow dim to the sight,
There comes: "Merry Christmas!
And, boy-days, good-night!"

Isn't It So?

Little boy, little girl, with the truth in your eyes,
They have shattered the faith I had,
They have broken the idols I used to prize—
All the idols that made me glad.
But you, you must know if the tale be true
That I heard in the long ago
Of the jolly old Saint and the way that he flew
With the presents—Now, isn't it so?

Little boy, little girl, with the trust in your eyes,
They have taken my trust away,
They have ended my dreams and have made me
wise—
But the fairies, they still must play;
The fairies still come in the evening light
And they dance in the sunset glow,
And their music, it ends at the stroke of midnight,
And they vanish—Now, isn't it so?

Little boy, little girl, with the joy in your eyes,
 They have blotted my picture fair—
And the castle of coals in the grate now lies
 In the ashes of cold despair.
But you, you can see where the fairy prince
 Goes to grapple the armored foe,
And the sparks sputter up as the blows make him
 wince,
And he yields him—Now, isn't it so?

Little boy, little girl, with belief in your eyes!
 They have deafened my willing ears,
But the jingles of bells from the north arise
 As they did in the other years,
And the Saint of our Christmas with laughter and
 shout
 Is a-flying across the snow—
O, the fancies I builded are scattered about,
 But he's coming—Now, isn't it so?

The Christmas Hymn

“And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda.”—Matthew, ii. 6.

“O, little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee
lie”—

The song brings back the silent peace of Christ-
mases gone by;

Brings back the olden mystery, and sets the heart
a-thrill

With fancies of the snow-draped firs that nodded
on the hill,

With memories of ruddy lights that night would
find aglow

Which from the cottage windows flung their ban-
ners on the snow.

“Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent
stars go by”—

The stars above the little town were very far and
high;

They marched triumphantly from lands whereof a
boy might dream
To other lands that beckoned him with dawn's
enchanting gleam;
But under all the silent stars that marched from
east to west,
The little town—the little town—contented, was at
rest.

“Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting
light”—
The mellow blaze of memory still leaps serenely
bright,
And through its wondrous necromance the bare
trees it illumines,
All pink and white and radiant with snowy apple
blooms
Whose petals, when the winter winds the branches
sway and lift,
Float dreamily away, away, to pile in drift on
drift.

“The hopes and fears of all the years are met in
thee to-night”—
Are met in every little town seen in the Christmas
light,
For none of us but muses now, when this old song
is sung,
Of all the blessings that were his when head and
heart were young,
And, miser-like, he counts his store of treasures,
for of them
He builds anew at Christmas time his “town of
Bethlehem.”



The Window of Toys

The Window of Toys

Ragged and grimy, with hungering eyes,

They stand at the window of wonderful toys,
And count all the marvels with whispering cries

That tell of the longing for glittering joys.

Their fingers are twitching to touch and to hold

The baubles that show in the tempting display—
And, knowing that even their wishes are bold,

They have not the courage for turning away.

And we, we look on with a chuckle and smile,

Or laugh at their boasting of what they would do
If one of the toys could be theirs for a while—

The toys that are perfect and gorgeously new.

We smile at their words and their gestures uncouth,

Their longings for what is held far from their
reach—

But under it all is a lesson of truth

That only the toys and the gamins could teach.

This life is a window through which we may see
The toys that we know would complete our
delight—

The toys to bring gladness to you and to me
Are ever and always set fair in our sight.
But we are held back by some mystical force
That bars us from reaching our fingers to touch
The trinkets that would be the fairy-like source
Of all of the glow that would gladden us much.

And we stand and hunger for what is withheld,
For fame and for fortune, for pleasure and pride;
By barriers invisible are we repelled,
Through power unknown our vain hopes are
denied.

We children—we children—ay, each of us peers
At the prizes he thinks would be chief of his joys—
We children we stand through the drift of the years
At the window of toys—at the window of toys!

On the Way

I can hear him singing, faintly,
As he urges on his deer,
And his song is mellowed quaintly
As the measures strike the ear,
But the lilt of it is jolly,
And the words of it are gay:
"Get the mistletoe and holly;
I have started on the way.

"Little fellow, little fellow, with the doubting in
your eyes,
I have started on my journey, 'neath the mystic
northern skies,
And I see you building fancies in the flicker of the
grate—
Little fellow, little fellow, while you wonder and
you wait."

I can hear the hoof-beats thudding,
As the snow is flung behind,
While the laden sleigh is scudding
With the swiftness of the wind;
And the echoes now are flinging
Broken murmurs of the song
That old Santa Claus is singing
While the reindeer speed along:

“Little fellow, little fellow, for the faith that still
you hold,
I am speeding down the windings of the trail I’ve
known of old—
And I know the deepest wishes in the golden
heart of you,
And the dreams you have and cherish are the
dreams that must come true.”

Ho, the gleaming holly berry,
And the branches of the tree,
And the measures mad and merry
Of the song for you and me!

Far and faint, but waxing clearer,
Comes the whirring of the whip,
While the good old Saint draws nearer
With this ballad on his lip:

“Little fellow, little fellow, while you sit and dream
of me,
And the marvel of the morning that shall show
the wondrous tree,
For your trust in all the fancies of the shadow
and the gleam,
I am starting on my journey down the highway
of your dream.”

Poor Old Mister Green

Old Mister Green—w’y, he’s so old
His hands ist shake like he is cold,
(’Cause he’s got palsy, my ma say,
When I ast why they shake ’at way).
Old Mister Green—I ast him is
There any little boys o’ his
’At’s lookin’ out for Santa Claus,
An’ he say: “No, but oncet there was.”

An’ he ’ain’t got no folks at all—
No little boys to scratch th’ wall,
Nor little girls ’at wants a doll,
Nor any pa or ma to tell
How Santa don’t like very well
To hear us children stamp an’ yell,
Nor cousins, nor ist folks he knows
Like we know Millers, I suppose.

Old Mister Green—when he come here,
W'y, was one day he shot a deer
Right where our house is! An' some bears!
An' he saw Indians ever'wheres!
I ast him was it lonesome nen,
When he an' ist some other men
Is all they is. He say somehow
It's not as lonesome as right now.

An' nen, 'ere's somepin in his eye
'At look ist like he want to cry.
I say: "I wisht 'at, Christmas, you
Could play like I'm a go' to do."
An' he ist pat my head; nen he
Say: "No more Christmas times for me—
I'm all alone, you understand;
Th' rest is in th' Christmas Land."

An' nen he go on down th' street
A-walkin' slow, ist like his feet

Is tired; an' nen I heard him moan:
"It's Christmas—an' I'm all alone."
I ast my ma what does he mean,
An' she say: "Poor old Mister Green!"

Christmasing

Tho' I goe throughout ye Marte
Where an thousande thynges be shown—
Marvel workes of wondrous Art,
Fit for Queenlie handes alone—
Still I seeke some comelie gift,
Some fayre fancie I pursue;
Down ye streame of song I drift—
For I goe a-Christmasing,
A-Christmasing for you.

Wolde I had ye Rose in bloome
That from all its treasured scent,
I might steale ye best perfume
To enhance thys sentimente;

Wolde I had ye Sunsette's Glowe
That I might select ye hue,
Whych wolde make ye gayest showe—
For I goe a-Christmasing,
A-Christmasing for you.

Wolde I had ye brightest Star
Of ye garlande in ye skyes!
(Yet, in soothe, more pleasing far
Are ye flashes of your eyes.)
Still, had I ye star of dawne
As a jewel it might do,
Your fayre hand to gleame upon—
For I goe a-Christmasing,
A-Christmasing for you.

Natheless, neither Rose nor Star
Nor ye Sunsette Glowe is mine—
So I roame where frettynges are,
Where I needs must stand in line.

Books, and muffes, and clockes, and fans,
And strange fancies olde and newe,
Tempt me, and uppesette my plans—
For I goe a-Christmasing,
A-Christmasing for you.

Do I find ye verie thyng?
Then I know it is amiss,
For my minde is whyspering:
“Some one else will give her thys.”
Zounds! Hey for ye olden time
When a drift of song wolde do!
Then I neede but send thys rhyme—
For I goe a-Christmasing,
A-Christmasing for you.

I. N. R. I.

“ And laid him in a manger. ”—St. Luke, ii. 7.

“ And he, bearing his cross, went forth. ”—St. John, xix. 17.

Mary, Mary, your song was sweet,
Soft and sweet, and crooning low;
True and tender its measures beat
Out into the morning glow
When the promise was made complete
On that Christmas long ago.

Shepherds watching their flocks, they heard
Angel choruses, word on word,
And their souls were with wonder stirred—
Mary, Mary, your song was sweet.

Gently, gently, you hummed the song
In the stable poor and bare—
Still it echoes, and echoes long,
In a mother-song all fair,

In a melody true and strong
That all humble folk may share.

Wise men, bearded, and gray, and gaunt,
Rode through sunbeams that fell aslant,
Giving voice to a glory chant—
Mary, Mary, your song was sweet.

Stripes and jeers, and the heavy tree—
These were his, and words of scorn,
Sorrow deeper than grief might be,
Bruising goad, and piercing thorn—
Still there echoed the melody
Which you crooned that Christmas morn.

One has brought him a winding-sheet,
One has spices for head and feet;
Now the price has been paid complete—
Mary, Mary, your song was sweet.

Samantha Ann

My sawdust heart is broken, and my china eyes are
sad—

This night has been the darkest that I ever, ever
had;

The little girl who owns me used to tuck me in my
bed

And whisper that she loved me, while she covered
up my head

And told me to be careful not to kick the covers
off,

For fear I might be croupy, or should catch the
whooping-cough.

But yesterday a stranger came and took my cher-
ished place—

A waxen, flax-haired stranger, with a bright, un-
battered face.

The little girl who owns me let me drop upon the floor,
And hugged the stylish stranger, and has thought
of me no more;
And all last night, neglected, I have slept beside the
wall,
Unhappy and untidy, poor Samantha Ann—a doll.

One year ago my fortune seemed to be serenely
bright—

The little girl would hold me in her arms from
morn till night;
She made me share her play with her, she tried to
make me eat,
She showed me to all callers—and they vowed that
I was sweet;
I had four sets of dresses, and a parasol, and fan,
And she would say that I was her beloved Samantha
Ann.

Alas! My dress is tattered—I've no other to put on;
Half of my hair is missing, and my poor left arm is
gone;

And now the silk-clad beauty that was smiling from
the tree

Has claimed all the attention which was once bestowed on me.

My sawdust heart is broken—I have slept against
the wall

Where she, with shouts of welcome for the other,
let me fall!

The Longest Day

Last day o' school is pretty long, an' so's th' day
before
July the fourth—an' I could name a half a dozen
more,
Like day before th' circus comes, an' day before
the day
When we're to have a picnic, but th' longest one,
I say,
Is when us children's waitin' till our folks will give
us leave
To hang up all our stockin's on th' tree on Christ-
mas eve.

It's hours an' hours from breakfast till we get a
lunch at noon,
An' ma she says 'at Santa he won't come a day too
soon,

So we'd as well be patient, an' not disobey nor
fight,
For fear 'at Santa'll know it when he comes around
at night;
Th' afternoon's the longest—it just won't get dark,
or late,
An' by-an'-by we wonder, an' we wait, an' wait, an'
wait!

But finally it's evening, an' we wait an' try to
hear
Th' jingle of his sleighbells—an' th' shadows look
so queer
When we sit by th' fireplace, an' th' flickers rise
an' fall
Like ghosts 'at goes a-dancin' on th' ceilin' an' th'
wall;
But we wait for old Santa—an' th' coals get white
an' red.
An' everything seems creepy, but we just won't go
to bed.

An' pa he tells us stories, an' ma she sings us songs,
An' we look at th' ashes, an' th' shovel, an' th'
tongs,

Till after while our eyelids are as heavy as can be,
An' keep a-droppin' shut until it's awful hard to
see,

An' then—it's Christmas mornin'! An' old Santa's
come and gone—

But still it seems like that long day is still agoin'
on!

His Christmas Wish

For Christmas? You ask me what would I receive
That should make all my life seem complete?
I wait not for fancy to conjure and weave
The impossible gifts I would greet
With welcoming smiles if they came to my hands—
But I'll tell you the gift I bespeak:
No jewel brought forth from some far-away lands,
But a wet little kiss on my cheek.

Ofttimes I recall it—the laugh in the dawn,
And the marvelling gaze at the tree,
Then the two little arms of the child who is gone,
As she clambered atop of my knee,
And clasped me, and held me, and whispered the word
Of the gift that she gave, which was “This”—
And I feigned my surprise, but my eyes were
a-blurred,
When my cheek felt the wet little kiss.

Ay, that was a treasure! No bauble of gold,
No rare jewel, nor trinket of worth
Could thrill me with joy to a measure untold—
There is nothing you'll find on the earth
Would bring me the joy that was mine in the days
When she lived. And the gift that I crave
Is her smile as she looked at the tree in amaze,
And the wet little kiss that she gave.

For Christmas? For Christmas, I want to sit here
When the dawn sends its first silver gleams,
And to think of the light and the laughter last year
And to picture her face in my dreams;
Till out from the silence that holds us apart,
Shall be given the boon that I seek:
The warmth of her arms, and the thrill of my heart,
And her wet little kiss on my cheek.

The Wise Men

Caspar, Melchior, Balthasar—
Three wise men, came from afar,
Led by that most wondrous star
 Which swung over Bethlehem.
Melchior in his hands brought gold,
Caspar, spices rare and old,
Balthasar brought myrrh—'tis told,
 In the legends wrought of them.

Ay, three wise men from the East;
Each urged on his plodding beast;
Gazing at the sky cloud-fleeced;
 Crossed the desert bleak and wild;
In strange, costly garments clad,
Chanting songs serene and glad,
For that in his arms he had
 Gifts to heap before a child.

They came through the city wall,
Minding not the watchman's call;
They but knew that they must fall
 Worshipping, upon their knees,
When they in their journey came,
Where the down-flung starry flame
Showed them Him they could not name—
 Wisest of all wise men, these.

Caspar, Melchior, Balthasar—
Three wise men from lands afar—
Saw and knew the mystic star
 Blazing over Bethlehem;
Out upon the pathless sands
They fared from their distant lands
With rare gifts held in their hands,
 Spices, gold, and kingly gems.

So to-day we that are wise
See the new star in the skies
Echoed in the children's eyes
 As unsullied souls that shine—

We bring gifts, for thus we show
That in our wise hearts we know,
As two thousand years ago,
 Childhood is a thing divine.



Not Coming

Not Coming

They can't come home for Christmas—and mother
sighs and stands
And looks out of the window, their letters in her
hands,
And tries to hide her feelin's, and I—well, here I've
set,
A-lookin' at the paper, an' haven't read it yet.
The headlines and the items is jumbled every way—
“They can't come home for Christmas,” is all they
seem to say.

I know what mother's thinkin'; she's lookin' down
the lane,
And mindin' how she'd counted to go to meet the
train—
I'd polished up the sleighbells until they looked
like gold,
And seemed as full of jingles as any bells could hold,

And we'd 'a' gone in early, and they'd 'a' tumbled
down,
And laughed an' waved their "hellos" to all they
knew in town.

The sky is gray and gloomy; the house is dark and
still;
The cedar-trees are lonesome where they stand on
the hill—
And we'd picked out the best one, the one we knew
would be
The very finest cedar to make a Christmas-tree.
The clock here on the mantel is tickin' sad and
slow;
"They can't come home for Christmas, they're not
a-comin'. No!"

And mother at the window looks out and down the
lane,
And I stare at my paper—but stare at it in vain,

For all the type is tangled and all the letters blurred
In one unendin' sentence, repeatin' word an' word—
The only news the world holds to-day for her and
me:

“They can't come home for Christmas,” is all that
I can see.

The Little Things

I see them all about me, the little things undone—
The wagon that I promised to “fix so it would
run,”

The doll, the drum, the trumpet, are scattered here
and there;

I promised I would take them when I'd the time
to spare.

And he—he was so patient; more so than I could
be,

Nor minded when I tumbled the trinkets from my
knee,

But went out softly singing, as do blithe little boys,
To wondrous make-believing with all his broken
toys.

I call him in a whisper that trembles to a sigh;
I call him in a whisper—but wait for no reply;

And then as at an altar before the toys I bow,
And touch with fumbling fingers— I'm not too
busy now!

Ah, now my hands are idle; my heart is idle, too—
It does not thrill in cadence with all the laughs I
knew.

I count the broken treasures he asked me to make
whole,
And count the niggard minutes I gave him as his
dole.

But I shall leave them broken, these toys that still
are his,
And he must hear my whisper in what fair place
he is:

*“I wonder if in heaven they will not let me do
The little things—the little things I did not do for
you!”*

THE END

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